

OFFENDER BASED TRANSACTION SYSTEM

Introduction:

In 1988, pursuant to amendments passed in chapter 943, Florida Statutes, several State of Florida agencies, including the Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA), standardized the reporting of criminal case data in the Offender Based Transaction System (OBTS). This system was intended to reduce county reporting workload by satisfying the reporting requirements of member agencies into one consistent reporting system. To this end, the reporting of criminal case data via OBTS satisfies the SRS reporting requirements established for circuit and county criminal summary data. Although many counties also report juvenile case data via the OBTS (JOBTS), the OSCA does not currently capture this information. Consequently, all counties must continue to report juvenile court data via the paper procedures outlined in this manual. The use of JOBTS data is under review and every effort will be made to capture this data in the future.

For maximum flexibility, each county is free to implement any methodology for maintaining and reporting OBTS data. The OSCA only requires that OBTS data submitted to be used for SRS aggregation conform to the specifications outlined in the OBTS Data Element Dictionary (current version). An editing program is available that reviews county submissions for conformance to these specifications and assists the county in making these submissions to the OSCA. The OSCA OBTS coordinator will assist the counties in obtaining this program and in verifying that submissions are usable for SRS aggregation. The OSCA OBTS coordinator will also assist each county in transitioning their reporting from paper to OBTS as needed. It is important to note that records considered valid for use by the OSCA may not be valid for use by other agencies. Counties that are experiencing problems with non-SRS related data in the OBTS are encouraged to contact the respective agency to work out their difficulties.

In conformance with SRS reporting requirements, criminal data must be reported monthly. Counties may submit data through electronic submissions via OBTS. They may not alternate between submission methods. If a county opts to submit electronically, then all new data and all amended data must be submitted via OBTS. This requirement includes amendments submitted in support of the annual judicial certification process. Since OBTS can significantly reduce the administrative burden of reporting, ***participation in OBTS is strongly encouraged for all counties***. Moreover, the OSCA OBTS coordinator will assist any county in converting from paper to electronic reporting. However, participation in the OBTS does not supercede SRS reporting requirements. Thus, should a county, which has been submitting data via OBTS, be unable to submit this data for a period of six months, then, that county may be required to submit paper SRS reports for the missing data and may be required to undergo the OBTS verification process again before OBTS submission will be accepted. Please contact the OSCA OBTS coordinator, at (850) 922-5094, to discuss your specific case.

OFFENDER BASED TRANSACTION SYSTEM

The following is a description of how the criminal Summary Reporting System (SRS) reports are calculated from the Offender Based Transaction System (OBTS) data. It is imperative that the data is entered correctly into the data fields; otherwise, your statistical reports will not reflect accurate judicial workload. Each data element listed also includes the page number where it can be located in the **OBTS Data Element Dictionary** (July 1997).

PART I: CIRCUIT CRIMINAL

For purposes of SRS data, a unique case in the circuit courts is defined by the court docket number (OBTS data element 3). Multiple charges as indicated in the sequence number (OBTS data element 4).

Prosecutor Phase

Defendants Accused and Counts Filed

The following data elements are used to extract SRS filing data:

- ▶ Prosecutor Filing Date (page 77);
- ▶ Florida Statute Violation Number (page 66);
- ▶ Level of Charge (page 62);
- ▶ Degree of Charge (page 63); and
- ▶ General Offense Character (page 64-65).

Defendants and Counts Disposed

The following data elements are used to extract SRS disposition data:

- ▶ Prosecutor Final Decision Date (page 78);
- ▶ Final Action by Prosecutor/Grand Jury (page 79-80);
- ▶ Level of Charge (page 62);
- ▶ Degree of Charge (page 63);
- ▶ General Offense Character (page 64-65); and
- ▶ Florida Statute Violation Number (page 66).

OFFENDER BASED TRANSACTION SYSTEM

Court Phase

Defendants and Counts Disposed

The following data elements are used to extract SRS disposition data:

- ▶ Court Decision Date (page 98);
- ▶ Court Action Taken (page 99-100);
- ▶ Type of Trial (page 103);
- ▶ Defendant's Final Plea (page 104);
- ▶ Level of Charge (page 83);
- ▶ Degree of Charge (page 84);
- ▶ General Offense Character (page 85-86); and
- ▶ Florida Statute Violation Number (page 87).

Post Sentence Phase

Reopened Cases

The following data elements are used to extract the number of reopened cases:

- ▶ Date Charge Reopened (page 132); and
- ▶ Reason Charge Reopened (page 133) (code O).

Examples of reopened cases include, but are not limited to the following:

- Drug court judicial status review hearings;
- Sentence modifications pursuant to rule 3.800; or
- Cases remanded from appellate court.

Special Proceedings - Initial Phase

Bond Hearings

The following data element is used to extract the number of bond hearings:

- ▶ Date of Bond Hearing (page 59).

Adversary Preliminary Hearings

The following data element is used to extract the number of adversary preliminary hearings:

- ▶ Date of Adversary Preliminary Hearing (page 60).

OFFENDER BASED TRANSACTION SYSTEM

Prosecutor Phase

No Files

The following data elements are used to extract the number of no files:

- ▶ Prosecutor Final Decision Date (page 78); and
- ▶ Final Action by Prosecutor/Grand Jury (page 79-80) (code L or J).

Note: A case will not be counted as a no file unless all charges reflect code "L or J" in the prosecutor final action field.

Post Sentence Phase

Violations of Probation

The following data elements are used to extract the number of violations of probation:

- ▶ Date Charge Reopened (page 132); and
- ▶ Reason Charge Reopened (page 133) (code V).

Post Conviction Relief Motions

The following data elements are used to extract the number of post conviction relief motions:

- ▶ Date Charge Reopened (page 132); and
- ▶ Reason Charge Reopened (page 133) (code P).

Appeals Filed From County Court

The following data element is used to extract the number of appeals filed from county criminal court:

- ▶ Date of Notice of Appeal (page 135).

Note: The number of appeals filed are derived from county court OBTS records. These are appeals filed from county criminal to circuit criminal. Appeals to the District Court of Appeal are not included.

OFFENDER BASED TRANSACTION SYSTEM

PART II: COUNTY CRIMINAL

For purposes of SRS data, a unique case is defined by using the defendant's last name, birth date, and date of arrest. Thus, the SRS software will only report one filing or disposition if an individual has more than one case filed or disposed on the same day. For dispositions, the SRS software uses the name at final disposition, date of birth, and prosecutor final decision date or court decision date to make this determination.

It should be noted that for county criminal cases that have been initiated by a summons or notice to appear rather than an arrest, the date the summons or notice to appear is served must be entered for the date of arrest when a case is opened or updated. This date is used to generate filings in county court. If an arrest is subsequently made, the date of arrest should then be entered into the date of arrest field of the OBTS data record

If a case is initiated by a sworn complaint, the date the sworn complaint is filed should be entered into the date of arrest field. However, if a *capias* or summons is subsequently served, the service date should be entered for the date of arrest.

Basic, Initial and Prosecutor Phases

Defendants Accused

The following data elements are used to extract the SRS filing data:

- ▶ Date of Arrest (page 38);
- ▶ Florida Statute Violation Number (page 48 or 66);
- ▶ Name at Arrest (page 8);
- ▶ Date of Birth (page 12); and
- ▶ Prosecutor Filing Date (in the case of a direct file) (page 77) .

Prosecutor Phase

Defendants Disposed

The following data elements are used to extract the SRS disposition data:

- ▶ Name at Final Disposition (page 9);
- ▶ Date of Birth (page 12);
- ▶ Prosecutor Final Decision Date (page 78);
- ▶ Final Action by Prosecutor/Grand Jury (page 79-80); and
- ▶ Florida Statute Violation Number (page 66).

OFFENDER BASED TRANSACTION SYSTEM

Court Phase

Defendants Disposed

The following data elements are used to extract SRS disposition data:

- ▶ Name at Final Disposition (page 9);
- ▶ Date of Birth (page 12);
- ▶ Court Decision Date (page 98);
- ▶ Court Action Taken (page 99-100);
- ▶ Type of Trial (page 103);
- ▶ Defendant's Final Plea (page 104); and
- ▶ Florida Statute Violation Number (page 87).

Post Sentence Phase

Reopened Cases

The following data elements are used to extract the number of reopened cases:

- ▶ Date Charge Reopened (page 132); and
- ▶ Reason Charge Reopened (page 133) (code O).

Examples of reopened cases include, but are not limited to the following:

- Drug court judicial status review hearings;
- Sentence modifications pursuant to rule 3.800; or
- Cases remanded from appellate court.

Special Proceedings

Bond Hearings

The following data element is used to extract the number of bond hearings:

- ▶ Date of Bond Hearing (page 59).

Adversary Preliminary Hearings

The following data element is used to extract the number of adversary preliminary hearings:

- ▶ Date of Adversary Preliminary Hearing (page 60).

OBTS ELEMENTS USED TO CALCULATE SRS

The following chart depicts the OBTS data elements needed to calculate various SRS reports, for circuit and county criminal. Each data element can be located in the OBTS data element dictionary on the page number indicated on the chart.

<u>Page</u>	<u>Elements Needed for Filings</u>	<u>Circuit</u>	<u>County</u>
4	Court Docket Number	x	x
5	Sequence Number	x	x
6	Court Designator	x	x
7	Disposition Contributor	x	x
8	Name at Arrest		x
9	Date of Birth		x
38	Date of Arrest		x
51	Statute Number (I)		x
62	Level of Charge (P)	x	
63	Degree of Charge(P)	x	
64	General Offense Character (P)	x	
66	Statute Number (P)	x	x
77	Prosecutor Filing Date	x	x
<u>Elements Needed for Disposition</u>			
9	Name at Disposition		x
78	Prosecutor Final Decision Date	x	x
79	Prosecutor Final Action	x	x
83	Level of Charge (C)	x	
84	Degree of Charge (C)	x	
85	General Offense Character (C)	x	
87	Statute Number (C)	x	x
98	Court Decision Date	x	x
99	Court Action	x	x
103	Type of Trial	x	x
104	Defendants Final Plea	x	x
<u>Elements Needed for Special Proceedings</u>			
59	Date of Bond Hearing	x	x
60	Date of Adversary Hearing	x	x
132	Date Charge Reopened	x	x
133	Reason Charge Reopened	x	x
135	Date of Notice of Appeal	x	

MULTIPLE SPECIAL PROCEEDINGS

Special proceedings offer a unique challenge to SRS reporting. Not only may these proceedings occur in different phases of the record but the same special proceeding may occur several times in the same reporting period. This event is particularly problematic because OBTS records are overwritten each time the record is submitted. The following procedure will help ensure that all events are being captured and that reporting is simple and accurate.

If the same special proceeding event occurs within the same reporting period, report the first occurrence of the event in all active charges of the OBTS case record. Second and subsequent occurrence of the same event type should be reported on a new 750/770 character OBTS record using the following criteria:

- The **Basic Phase** must contain the same information as the master record except that the OBTS number must be all 8's, and the sequence number for the second record will be 900, the third record, 901, etc.
- The **Initial Phase** status field must contain a "P" in the status field. The rest of the information should be the same as the **Initial Phase** of the master record with the exception of the bond hearing date or adversary preliminary hearing date. If either a bond hearing or adversary preliminary hearing is being reported then the date field should reflect the most recent date for the event.
- The **Prosecutor Phase** status field must contain an "N." The rest of the fields in the prosecutor phase should be blank or contain the allowable default values.
- The **Court Phase** must contain the same information as the master record.
- The **Sentence Phase** can contain the same information as the master record or the allowable default values.
- The **Post Sentence Phase** must contain the reopened date and reopened reason for the new event.

Example:

Assume that a case has five charges. Charges 001 and 003 have been dropped by the prosecutor (Final Action Code "L") who plans to proceed on the remaining charges. A bond hearing is held on the case as a whole and the bond hearing data is completed on all active charges in the **Initial Phase** of the OBTS case record. Assume now, that the case has been disposed of within the same reporting period and that also within this same period, the defendant violates probation. Since this is a different type of special proceeding than a bond hearing, it too is entered into all active charges of the OBTS case record. However, if the defendant violates probation a second time in this same reporting period, the county should generate a new OBTS record using a 900 series sequence number to report this additional violation.

DEFENDANTS ON PRETRIAL DIVERSION

The following section for reporting the disposition of pre-trial diversion cases (pages 10-10 through 10-13) explains the correct reporting procedures to follow. **Further, the same pre-trial diversion disposition reporting procedures apply to cases accepted into the drug court program.** The instructions address reporting procedures before or after an Information is filed. Please pay close attention to the process for reporting these cases when an individual fails to complete the program.

Drug Court: The judicial workload associated with monitoring drug court cases is substantially more involved than that of regular drug cases. The requisite judicial status review hearings that occur throughout the life of drug court cases require additional reporting of post-sentence events for SRS. These judicial status review hearings are reported as reopened cases in the post-sentence phase of the OBTS record using the reopened code "O" (page 10-6).

Please refer to Multiple Special Proceedings (page 10-9) - the "900" Sequence Records for further procedures on reporting multiple occurrences in the same reporting period for judicial status review hearings associated with drug court cases. This process should be followed when the number of judicial reviews exceeds the number of original OBTS records, (i.e., all of the Post Sentence Phase fields have already been used to report the reviews or other post-sentence events).

CIRCUIT CRIMINAL

Before an Information is Filed

These procedures should be followed when a defendant is placed on pretrial diversion prior to the filing of an information or indictment:

- The Prosecutor Phase should be completed;
- The **Final Action by the Prosecutor** (page 79) should reflect code P (pretrial diversion); and
- The **Prosecutor Filing Date** field (page 77) should contain all 8's for not applicable.

Successful Completion of Pretrial Diversion Program

These procedures should be followed if a defendant successfully completes a pretrial diversion and the state attorney subsequently drops the charge(s):

- The **Prosecutor Final Decision Date** (page 78) should be changed to reflect the date the paperwork is filed which dismisses the case; and
- The **Final Action by the Prosecutor** (page 79) should be changed to reflect code L (dropped or abandoned).

DEFENDANTS ON PRETRIAL DIVERSION

Failure to Complete Pretrial Diversion

These procedures should be followed if the defendant fails to complete pretrial diversion and an information is subsequently filed:

- The **Prosecutor Filing Date** (page 77) should be changed to reflect the date the information is filed;
- The **Prosecutor Final Decision Date** (page 78) should be changed to reflect the date the information is filed;
- The **Final Action by the Prosecutor** (page 79) should be changed to reflect code N (filed).

Note: These records will **not** be reported as filings or dispositions on the SRS report unless an information is filed.

After an Information is Filed

These procedures should be followed when a defendant is placed on pretrial diversion after an information is filed:

- The Prosecutor Phase of the record should be completed;
- The **Prosecutor Filing Date** (page 77) should reflect the date the information is filed;
- The **Prosecutor Final Decision Date** (page 78) should reflect the date the information is filed;
- The **Prosecutor Final Action** (page 79) should reflect N (filed);
- The Court Phase of the record should be completed; and
- The **Court Action Taken** (page 99) should reflect H (pretrial diversion).

DEFENDANTS ON PRETRIAL DIVERSION

Successful Completion of Pretrial Diversion

These procedures should be followed when the defendant successfully completes a pretrial diversion and the state attorney subsequently drops the charge(s):

- The **Prosecutor Final Decision Date** (page 78) should be changed to reflect the date the paperwork is filed which dismisses the case; and
- The **Final Action by the Prosecutor** (page 79) should be changed to reflect code O (nolle prosequi).

Note: The disposition codes in the Court Phase take precedence over the disposition codes in the Prosecutor Phase; therefore, these cases will continue to be counted in the **Before Trial, Other** disposition category even after the nolle prosequi is entered.

Failure to Complete Pretrial Diversion

These procedures should be followed when a defendant fails to complete a pretrial diversion:

- The **Date Charge Reopened** (page 132) should reflect the date the paper work is filed which reopens the case; and
- The **Reason Charge Reopened** (page 133) should reflect code O (other).

Sentencing After Failure to Complete Pretrial Diversion

These procedures should be followed when a defendant is sentenced after failing to complete pretrial diversion:

- The Court Phase of the record should reflect the new **Court Decision Date** (page 98);
- The new **Court Action Taken** (page 99) information should be entered;
- The **Type of Trial** (page 103) information should be entered;
- The **Defendant's Final Plea** (page 104) should be entered; and
- The **Date Reopened Charge Closed** (page 134) the court decision date should be entered here to identify the date the reopened charge was closed.

DEFENDANTS ON PRETRIAL DIVERSION

COUNTY CRIMINAL

The court phase of the record is used when a defendant is placed on pretrial diversion prior to or after an information is filed. These procedures should be followed:

- The **Court Decision Date** (page 98) should reflect the date the pretrial diversion order is filed; and
- The **Court Action Taken** (page 99) should reflect code H (pretrial diversion).

Successful Completion of Pretrial Diversion

These procedures should be followed when the defendant successfully completes pretrial diversion and the state attorney subsequently drops the charge(s):

- The **Prosecutor Final Decision Date** (page 78) should be changed to reflect the date the paperwork is filed which dismisses the case;
- The **Final Action by the Prosecutor** (page 79) should be changed to reflect code “O” (nolle prosequi) or “L” (dropped/abandoned) depending upon the type of dismissal filed.

Note: The disposition codes in the Court Phase take precedence over the disposition codes in the Prosecutor Phase; therefore, these cases will continue to be counted in the **Before Trial, Other** disposition category, even after the nolle prosequi is entered.

Failure to Complete Pretrial Diversion ([See OBTS Tech Memo 03-03](#))

If there has been NO court involvement in the case, these procedures should be followed when the defendant fails to complete pretrial diversion and an information is subsequently filed:

- The Prosecutor Phase should be completed;
- The **Prosecutor Filing Date** (page 77) should reflect the date the information is filed;
- The **Prosecutor Final Decision Date** (page 78) should reflect the date the information is filed;
- The **Final Action by the Prosecutor** (page 79) should be code N (filed); and
- The Court Phase should be reset with default values.

DEFENDANTS ON PRETRIAL DIVERSION

If there has been NO court involvement in the case, these procedures should be followed when the defendant fails to complete pretrial diversion and an information is NOT filed:

- The Prosecutor Phase should be completed;
- The **Prosecutor Filing Date** (page 77) should be all 8s;
- The **Prosecutor Final Decision Date** (page 78) should be the date the decision is made not to file;
- The **Final Action by the Prosecutor** (page 79) should be changed to reflect code L (dropped/abandoned); and
- The Court Phase should be reset with default values.

If there has been court involvement in the case, these procedures should be followed when the defendant fails to complete pretrial diversion:

- The **Date Charge Reopened** (page 132) should reflect the date the paper work is filed which reopens the case; and
- The **Reason Charge Reopened** (page 133) should reflect code O (other).

Sentencing After Failure to Complete Pretrial Diversion

These procedures should be followed when a defendant is sentenced after failing to complete pretrial diversion:

- The Court Phase of the record should reflect the new **Court Decision Date** (page 98);
- The new **Court Action Taken** (page 99) information should be entered;
- The **Type of Trial** (page 103) information should be entered;
- The **Defendant's Final Plea** (page 104) should be entered; and
- The **Date Reopened Charge Closed** (page 134) the court decision date should be entered here to identify the date the reopened charge was closed.

UNIFORM CASE NUMBERING

The Uniform Case Number (UCN) system was established by Supreme Court Administrative Order dated July 6, 1998 and requires that all clerks of court implement the UCN system for all active cases by January 1, 2003. The UCN is a 20 character case number intended to "... ensure that, in this age of technology, case numbers include unique identifiers that easily distinguish the origin of a case, type of case, year of filing, and the numerical sequence of a case when case numbers are displayed externally in an automated format for public access." In the appendix to this order, the Supreme Court establishes the use of the UCN for state reporting purposes. Hence, by 2003, all clerks must report court related data using the UCN including OBTS data.

The OBTS submission layout has been extended from 750 to 770 characters to allow for the reporting of the 20 character UCN at the end of the record. Other minor adjustments to the OBTS layout may also necessary to accomodate the UCN. Such adjustments are under review by the OBTS Workgroup and will be promulgated when available. No alterations to the OBTS submission layout should be made until said changes are incorporated into the Criminal Justice Data Element Dictionary or until otherwise directed by the OBTS Workgroup. ([See OBTS Tech Memo 03-01](#))

The Court Type sub-field is intended to provide additional detail concerning the cases handled by a division of court; however, these classifications are not intended to be absolute. In the event that a defendant has multiple charges which may fall into separate categories, the Court Type sub-field should reflect the category most closely associated with the division that will handle the case. For example, an information is filed with two charges, one a misdemeanor, and the other a criminal traffic charge. This information should be filed as one case with two sequence numbers. The court type should reflect the division handling both charges (either MM for misdemeanor or CT for criminal traffic).

The Supreme Court Order specifies that all parts of the 20 character UCN are mandatory for state reporting purposes. Some conditions are defined in the Order such as the description of the subfields within the UCN. One requirement necessary to state reporting is that the UCN must be continuous, no spaces are allowed. With respect to SRS/OBTS reporting, the UCN/Sequence Number pair in the OBTS record serves as the unique identifier of a case record. In circuit court, the UCN/Sequence Number pair is the only unique identifier for an OBTS case record. Consequently, SRS/OBTS reporting imposes some additional conditions on the content of the UCN, particularly in the Party/Identifier and Branch Location subfields. ([See OBTS Tech Memo 03-01](#))

For SRS, the Party/Defendant Identifier subfield (position 15-18 of UCN) is used to identify the defendants associated with a case. This field is analogous to the alphabetic suffix commonly added to the current local case numbers. In multi-defendant cases, the first four subfields of the UCN are frequently the same to facilitate case management. The party/defendant subfield then serves to distinguish each defendant associated with the case which, in turn, ensures a unique case record identifier. In single defendant cases, the party/defendant identifier trivially identifies the only defendant. Although there is considerable flexibility in formatting the party/defendant identifier relating to the UCNs use for public display, some constraints must be placed on this subfield for state reporting. These constraints are necessary to ensure uniqueness of the case

UNIFORM CASE NUMBERING

record, eliminate potential ambiguities and to provide some statewide consistency which is necessary for analysis and tracking. For example, to ensure uniqueness and clarity, party/defendant identifier subfield cannot contain four of the same character. Thus 'XXXX', 'AAAA', '0000', etc. are not allowed. ([See OBTS Tech Memo 03-01](#))

The simplest and preferred implementation would be to continue the alphabetic suffixing scheme currently in use by most counties. That is, the letter A, placed in the first position of the subfield, will identify the first (or only) defendant of a case, B for the second defendant and so on. The remaining three positions should be filled in with X's since spaces are not provided for in the UCN. When all letters of the alphabet are used in the first position, the county can begin with the second position and so on through all four positions of the subfield. Thus, the party identifier subfield might look like 'AXXX', 'BXXX', 'ZDXX', 'ZZLX' and so on. Up to 456,872 defendants may be associated with a case in this manner. Note that, as above, 'XXXX' is not valid. Another option might be to use all numeric values such as '0001', '0002', ... , '9998' allowing for up to 9990 defendants to be associated with a single case. Again, '0000', '9999', '2222' and so on would not be allowed.

There is some provision in this subfield to allow a county to capture additional case related data that might be lost in the transition from a local case numbering scheme to the uniform case numbering scheme. Should this be required, the party identifier subfield may be split into two separate subfields with positions 1 & 2 (15 & 16 of the UCN) reserved for the additional information the county wishes to capture and positions 3 & 4 (17 & 18 of the UCN) reserved for the party/defendant identifier. Information placed in positions 1 & 2 of the party identifier must be alphanumeric but is otherwise unrestricted. Positions 3 & 4 are constrained as normal for the party/defendant identifier field. Please contact the OSCA OBTS coordinator to discuss possible implementations. The four(two) character constraint outlined above still applies, however, even when partitioning the subfield.

This provision provides a great deal of flexibility in the accounting of case data at the local level. However, one is cautioned against using this subfield to record information that may change during the life of a case. This caution is necessary because the UCN is part of the case record identifier. Thus, any change to any part of the UCN will be interpreted as a new and different case record for SRS purposes. Consequently, changes to the UCN will require the clerk to request that the OSCA delete the original case record from their case tracking systems and subsequently, resubmit the case record with the changed data. As this is not a simple process, the OSCA recommends consistent and limited coding within this field.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

OBTS Frequently Asked Questions

1. (Q) I thought the UCN system applied only to reporting data on the Internet?

(A) Yes, that is one of its functions. However, the consistent results for a UCN system at all levels of court was applied to state reporting at the time the original administrative order was issued.

2. (Q) Do I have to convert old case numbers to the UCN format?

(A) You must convert local case numbers to UCN by January 1, 2003 for state reporting purposes and for public access. The OSCA recommends that local case numbers that have already been assigned be retained along with the UCN to ensure historical integrity.

3. (Q) Can both existing local case numbers and the new UCN be used?

(A) The Summary Reporting System does not address case management procedures internal to each clerk's office. However, it is critical that only one, consistent, statewide reporting methodology be used. Given this need, the UCN will be used as the record identifier for court data. The Clerk of Court may continue to report local case numbers until January 1, 2003, after which they must report a UCN for all cases.

4. (Q) How do I report a 20# character UCN in the OBTS record, which has only 14 spaces?

(A) For new cases, this requirement presents no confusion. The 14 character court docket number field (field 3) of the OBTS record may be left blank and the 20# character UCN is simply appended to the end. Older cases that already have an existing local case number present a different problem. The OSCA recommends that local case numbers be retained to ensure that no information is lost in the transition to UCN's. If a clerk's office wishes to report both the UCN and the existing local case number, the existing local case number must be included in the 14 character court docket number (field 3) of the OBTS record and the UCN must be appended to the end of the record.

5. (Q) What about cases that I have previously reported using a local case number which now have a UCN?

(A) To prevent duplicate records from entering the reporting system, ALL cases reported to the OSCA that were previously reported using a local case number, MUST include both the local case number and the UCN.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

6. (Q) What about cases with multiple charges? If I have to report one charge with the UCN, do I have to report all charges?

(A) Yes, the clerk must report ALL charges with both the local case number and the UCN even if information changes on only one charge. The requirement prevents over counting by ensuring that all charges (represented by the sequence number "field 4") of a case are properly associated with the UCN.

7. (Q) How does the Court Type sub-field of the UCN cross to SRS case types?

(A) The Court Type sub-field of the UCN does not generate SRS case types. The Florida Statute, charge level and degree, and general offence character are the OBTS fields used for determining SRS case types. See Circuit Criminal Case Type Determinations (page 2-32 through 2-41) for more information.

8. (Q) Is this the final word on the use of the UCN?

(A) Probably not. As more counties begin to implement the UCN, we will inevitably need additional clarification/modification of the UCN system as it relates to SRS/OBTS reporting. Although every effort has been made to cover all the bases early, case accounting practices and real world events make for a complex and variable reporting environment. Watch the SRS manual web page (<http://www.flcourts.org/osca/divisions/srs/index.html>), the SRS forums group and broadcast faxes for discussions and additional information. Clarifications and modifications to the SRS Manual will come in the form of a technical memorandum.

9. (Q) How are OBTS and SRS related? Doesn't OSCA and FDLE use the same data?

(A) The below discussion is simplified and is not intended to apply to a particular county but rather to present a general overview of the process. Essentially, the Offender Based Transaction System (OBTS) provides circuit and county level criminal case data to several state agencies in one convenient format. Each agency uses this information for different purposes. The OSCA uses OBTS as a feeder of criminal data into its Summary Reporting System (SRS). (The OSCA aggregates individual summary totals outlined in this manual.) Consequently, those counties that submit data via OBTS need not to submit paper criminal reports.

Further, each county prepares a monthly ASCII text file consisting of case management data in a 750 character record. The format and content of this record is spelled out in the OBTS Criminal Justice Data Element Dictionary (07/1997). Essentially, one record equates to one court docket number/sequence number (county records are classified a little differently but in either case, a record is considered the unit of count for OBTS). Each county processes this flat file through an edit program provided by the OBTS Workgroup. This program prepares the data file for transmission to both FDLE and to the OSCA, and checks each record for conformity to the OBTS Data Element Dictionary standards.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

For SRS purposes, the OBTS edit program checks whether those fields needed to count a record for SRS are present and that the data contained in the field is valid as per the OBTS Data Element Dictionary. For example, the prosecutor filing date field should contain either a six digit date in the format mmdyy or all 8's. OBTS data is used by several agencies such as FDLE, DOC, DJJ and OSCA. Each agency uses the data for different purposes. The point of the OBTS edit program is to provide a minimum verification of the data in each field that satisfies all of the agency users. After receiving OBTS data from a county, each agency then applies additional criteria to suit their needs. For example, FDLE might prepare statistics on the initial arrest phase and so may not be concerned that the Prosecutor Filing Date is '888888.' OSCA, on the other hand, requires a month and year in that field in order to count the record for SRS.

After a file is processed successfully through the OBTS edit program, the submission is classified as valid for SRS which means that the data in the file meets the minimum criteria specified in the OBTS dictionary and that we can begin to classify each record for SRS statistics. This process is called scoring and is separate from the edit checks performed earlier by the OBTS edit program. This scoring criteria is applied to each record in an attempt to categorize them into an SRS case type and into a disposition category. The SRS case type is identified by the statute while the disposition category is determined by reviewing several fields together. The date of filing or disposition is also needed to determine the month/year for this record. If any of these fields do not contain correct information, the record cannot be scored, (i.e., categorized). For example, if the statute number cannot be cross referenced to an SRS case type, then the record cannot be counted even though the statute field may contain a value that passes OBTS edit checks. Similarly, the date can prevent a record from being counted. Additionally, fields are reviewed for inconsistencies in relation to other fields. For example, a felony statute with a misdemeanor charge level will pass the OBTS edit checks but will likely cause the record to be misclassified for SRS.

Looking at an actual example, one charge for a defendant has a statute that is cross referenced to the "Theft, Forgery & Fraud" case type with a misdemeanor charge level. This defendant also has a charge in the "Other Crimes Against Property" case type but with a felony charge level. When being counted, the lesser category of property crime will be selected over the more serious theft category because the property crime references a felony while the theft crime references a misdemeanor. Similarly, when classifying a record as a disposition, trial type, final plea and court action taken are all considered in relation to each other to determine the type of disposition (disposed by trial, plea etc). Inconsistencies in these fields could lead to a record being misclassified or not classified at all. A record that we cannot classify is said to be nonscoreable.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

10. (Q) What happens to my OBTS file after I send it to the OSCA?

(A) Essentially, the processing of OBTS files occurs in six stages:

Stage 1- Receipt and initial preparation: Submitted files are removed from the OSCA ftp site. Zip files are expanded and each file is given a standardized prefix to help with later processing. The file is then run through the OBTS edit program which checks each case for conformance to OBTS data dictionary specifications. The OBTS edit error reports are created. If a file exceeds a 5% error rate, it is rejected and sent back to the county. At this point, an SRS data file is created. A record is included in the SRS data file if all fields needed to score that record are present and conform to OBTS data dictionary specifications.

Stage 2- System Initialization: This is the stage where preliminary processing is done. A list of files to be processed is developed and ordered. The county is identified, records that did not pass OBTS edit checks are identified and other initialization tasks are performed.

Stage 3- Scoring: Each data file is then scored in both the filing and disposition categories. This stage checks statute numbers, charge level and degree, filing dates and other information needed to properly classify a case for SRS. Each charge is also ranked to determine the most serious charge within a court docket number.

Stage 4- Data base: Submitted case records are imported into our OBTS databases. New records are added. Cases already in the system and also in a data file are overwritten in their entirety.

Stage 5- Summarizing: In this stage, OBTS case data is summarized into SRS statistics and SRS tables are updated. Five SRS pages are computed in this stage, Circuit Criminal Defendants (page 1), Circuit Criminal Counts (page 2), Circuit Special Proceedings (page 3), County Criminal Defendants (page 8) and County Special Proceedings (page 9). Only the last three years are updated in the SRS summary tables.

Stage 6- Reporting: As a last stage, reports are generated containing basic statistics about the data file just processed. How many records in the file, number of circuit, county and juvenile records and so on. The OSCA also generates a separate set of reports detailing those records that were not counted for SRS or that contained discrepancies that may have prevented correct counting. These reports provide the case number, errant field, and the reason for the discrepancy. While not required, we hope that each county reviews these reports and amends the data at issue or, if the data is correct, contact us so that we may refine our scoring routines. These reports are sent back to the person listed as our OBTS point of contact. Careful review of these reports at the local level will help us improve the quality of SRS data which is increasingly used as a factor in a variety of workload, resource, and funding capacities. During processing, only stage one and stage six involve staff intervention.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

11. (Q) If a defendant is arrested on several charges but the prosecutor does not file on all of them, can I renumber my charges in the case record to match only those filed on?

(A) Yes. It is acceptable for the charges reflected in the Prosecutor Phase to be resequenced or renumbered to correspond with the counts reflected on the information or indictment. This occurs when a defendant is arrested on multiple charges that have been sequentially numbered in the Initial Phase but the state attorney elects not to file on all charges. However, if the original charge records have already been submitted to the OSCA, they must be deleted from the OSCA system before the renumbered charge records can be submitted.

12. (Q) How should the following circumstance be handled in which an Information was filed as to five charges, and an Amended Information was subsequently filed as to only four charges? No other changes were made to the original four counts. The Assistant State Attorney (ASA) was phoned and advised that it was indeed their intent not to prosecute the fifth charge, hence the filing of the Amended Information. What code should be used in the "Final Action by Prosecutor / Grand Jury" field to denote the dropped charge given that the charge was originally filed via an Information (i.e., there is a date in the "Prosecutor Filing Date" field), and that no formal Nolle Prosequi paperwork has or will be filed?

(A) The following steps should be taken for the above "Amended Information - Dropped Counts" scenario:

- 1. The original information filing date SHOULD REMAIN in the "Prosecutor Filing Date" field for the dropped charge.*
 - 2. The "O" code should be entered in the "Final Action by Prosecutor/Grand Jury" field for the dropped charge only.*
 - 3. The date of the Amended Information should be entered in the "Prosecutor Final Decision Date" field for the dropped charge only.*
 - 4. The "Prosecutor Filing Date" field for the remaining charges should not change from the original Information date.*
- Additionally, the "Z" code should be used for those counts that are listed on an arrest affidavit, but are never formally pursued by the state attorney on an Information.*

13. (Q) If an Information is filed and an Amended Information is subsequently filed adding additional charges, should all charges reflect the date the Amended Information was filed?

(A) No, the OBTS records for the original counts (charges) should not be changed to reflect the date the amended information is filed. The software used by the OSCA to extract the SRS statistics from the OBTS records will determine the "defendant count" as the most serious charges filed, regardless of whether different filing dates are reported for each charge.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

14. (Q) Each month I receive rejections for Invalid Race Field- Blank not Allowed. The race field for these cases contain an O (Oriental/Asian). According to page 11 of the OBTS dictionary, the letter O is a valid code. Why are these rejections appearing on the Error Report?

(A) There are several potential causes for these rejections. First, please check to ensure that you have not entered the number "0" in the race field instead of the letter "O". Second, be sure that either your system defaults to capital letters or you enter a capital "O" in the field. A lower case "o" will reject. Finally, you may need to check the version of the OBTS edit program your county is using. The most recent version of the edit program should accept the "O" code in the race field with no trouble.

15. (Q) A defendant has been sentenced and later withdraws his plea and is re-sentenced, should this case be reported as 1) a reopening or 2) the Final Decision Date in the Court Phase updated to reflect the re-sentenced date?

(A) This sounds like a fairly unique circumstance. However, you would not change the Court Decision Date to reflect the new sentencing. The appropriate course of action in this circumstance is to reopen the count and modify the Sentence Phase to reflect the new conditions of sentence. The Court Decision Date should only change if: (1) the defendant is declared mentally incompetent, then is subsequently brought back before the court after being found competent at a later date; or (2) the defendant fails to complete a pre-trial diversion program and is subsequently brought back before the court for judicial action.

16. (Q) How should noncriminal infractions be disposed of for SRS reporting?

(A) By non-criminal infractions I mean those non-criminal violations supported by Florida Statute such a boating citations, violations of hunting, fishing, and trapping licensor requirements, and violations of provisions regarding dangerous dogs. These charges should contain "I" in the level of charge field for the OBTS. Traffic citations are not included.

Non Criminal Infractions should be disposed of for SRS under the disposition category "Before Trial, Plea," when payment for the citation is received. Additionally, recent SRS field auditing has revealed that not all case management systems are currently programmed to close out said cases for SRS. Counties experiencing this problem should work to immediately resolve any programming deficiencies in order to ensure SRS data accuracy.